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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 WARSAW 000073

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TAGS: [AF](#) [BO](#) [GG](#) [IS](#) [PL](#) [PREL](#) [SY](#) [UP](#)

SUBJECT: POLAND/GAERC: ADDITIONAL INPUT FOR JAN 26-27 EU FM MEETING

REF: A. STATE 4297

[1](#)B. WARSAW 00062

[1](#)C. STATE 5430

[1](#)D. STATE 1985

[1](#)E. STOCKHOLM 0032

Classified By: DCM Quanrud for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. In response to reftel A points, MFA Political Director Witold Sobkow told the DCM January 22 that the GAERC would focus heavily on the EU role in resolving the Gaza conflict and on energy security issues. Sobkow accused Germany of undermining efforts to develop a common EU energy strategy. He said that Poland is reluctant to accept Guantanamo detainees, but would push other EU members to help. The EU will likely delay the EU-Syria Association Agreement by 4-6 months, based on "legal requirements." Regarding Afghanistan, Poland is having difficulty getting other EU members to commit personnel for PRT missions. On Belarus, Sobkow said that no decision will be taken to invite President Lukashenka to the summit launching the Eastern Partnership until after the EU completes its six-month evaluation of Belarus' progress. END SUMMARY.

EU and Gaza

[1](#)2. (SBU) MFA Political Director Witold Sobkow told the DCM that he expects much of the discussion at GAERC to focus on how to revamp and revitalize the EU border assistance mission in Rafah and how to stop the weapons smuggling into Gaza.

Energy Security

[1](#)3. (C) Sobkow labeled both Ukraine and Russia as "guilty parties" during the recent gas crisis and said that the Polish MFA has been careful not to assign blame. The elimination of RosUkrEnergo from the gas transit agreement was a positive development.

[1](#)4. (C) Regarding EU energy security, Sobkow said that the Polish position on developing new gas and electric interconnections has softened since the Ukraine-Russia gas conflict, but he expressed concern that German officials appear to be undermining the development of a common EU energy strategy. During a recent political directors lunch in Prague, the Germans claimed that it was "up to the companies" to decide the best course of action on energy policy. The Germans are also pressuring the European Commission to minimize its involvement in developing a common

EU energy strategy. He wryly added that German FM Steinmeier and former Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder--who currently serves as the head of the shareholders committee of Nordstream--are from the same camp.

Guantanamo

15. (C) Poland is still reluctant to accept Guantanamo detainees, according to Sobkow, but it will encourage other EU countries to help the United States, and is pleased by the decision of the Administration to close the facility.

Syria

16. (C) Sobkow indicated that the EU appears to have found a legal mechanism to delay the approval of the EU-Syria Association Agreement, for between four and six months. He cited the EU treaty (Article 24.5) which allows for individual member states to take time to ensure that an agreement complies with each country's constitutional requirements. This was both a legal and a politically expedient argument for those member states who did not wish to appear to be blocking the agreement at this time.

Afghanistan

17. (C) Sobkow expressed frustration with his inability to convince other EU members to commit personnel to PRTs in

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Afghanistan. That despite his repeated canvassing, he has been unable to gain any support among the other 26 EU members. FM Sikorski remains committed to the idea of garnering EU support for the PRTs and will probably raise the issue during the ministerial lunch at GAERC. The track record thus far on these types of solicitations within the EU has been weak: the EU needs 400 people for the EUPOL, but only received 33 applicants for the positions, of which half were considered acceptable.

Belarus

18. (C) Sobkow said that the Czech EU presidency was premature in its announcement that Belarusian President Lukashenka would be invited to the May 2009 summit marking the launch of the Eastern Partnership. He said an invitation would not be extended until after the EU completes its six-month evaluation of Belarus' progress in April. Sobkov said the EU should not invite Lukashenka unless Belarus demonstrates real progress in democratic reforms.

Georgia

19. (C) Sobkow believed that the issue of how to move forward on Georgia might be raised during the GAERC lunch. EU Political Director Robert Cooper has been circulating ideas within the EU on how to exclude South Ossetia and Abkhazia Russian passport holders from EU visa-regimes with Russia and how to enforce visa sanctions. The EU is currently exploring legal and administrative barriers such as requiring Russian passport holders from the region to bring notarized notes and pictures proving that their homes are located inside Russia's border.

110. (C) COMMENT: Sobkow provided a frank description of Poland's battles within the EU, including efforts to take on perceived German complacency on energy security issues. He may have exaggerated Polish firmness on Belarus, but he acknowledged that others in the MFA are strongly inclined to open up to Lukashenka. Although he claimed that the GoP would require further progress from Lukashenka (beyond the

release of political prisoners) before he can be invited to the launching of the Eastern Partnership, the EU correspondent told us separately that Lukashenka must only avoid any back-sliding. It may be that Foreign Minister Sikorski himself is driving the process to bring the Belarusians into the Eastern Partnership as soon as possible.

Such leniency towards Lukashenka could put the Poles in conflict with their Swedish co-sponsors of the Eastern Partnership, who are demanding (Ref E) further progress from the Lukashenka regime.

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